

IN HONOR OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DANBURY CHAPTER OF THE NAACP

HON. CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, throughout America, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, has worked tirelessly to ensure our Nation's creed, "that all men are created equal," rings true.

Recently, Connecticut's Greater Danbury Chapter of the NAACP celebrated its 50th anniversary. I rise to honor the efforts and contributions of those who have been instrumental in the development of this local chapter over the years and commend them for their support and dedication to the community.

During the height of the civil rights movement, the Danbury chapter of the NAACP was actively involved in numerous local and national events in pursuit of justice and equality. In 1963, approximately 75 members traveled from Danbury to Washington, DC to listen to Dr. Martin Luther King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech and participated in the historic March on Washington.

In 1979, Danbury's main street was flooded with some 400 people, including the son of President Jimmy Carter, James Earl "Chip" Carter, to march from Kenney Park to city hall protesting the distribution of offensive pamphlets by a member of the Klu Klux Klan.

And in the 1960s and 1970s, the Danbury NAACP was instrumental in influencing policy changes to encourage the hiring of African-Americans and minorities citywide in response to discriminatory hiring and admission practices at the Henry Abbott Technical School.

Today, continuing the tradition of promoting social justice, the Danbury chapter of the NAACP is focused on improving affordable housing, ensuring quality education for children and adults, and encouraging people to vote and participate in the political process. Under the leadership of the Reverend Ivan S. Pitts, the chapter has seen a surge in membership, amplified meeting attendance, and the renewed respect of its leaders within the community.

Beyond today's chapter leadership, I would like to formally applaud former presidents of the Danbury NAACP over the past 50 years: Constantine Brandi, the Reverend Leslie G. Lawson, Richard Brown, Dr. Frederick Adam, Samuel Hyman, Sylvester Craig, Ben Andrews, Robert Cherry, Jr., Harold Taylor, Gladys Cooper, the Reverend Aaron Samuels, William J. Knight, Stanford Smith, Sr., Daryle Dennis, Sherrie Neptune, and the Reverend Donald Dolberry.

Recent events in Danbury remind us that racism is not just a historical stain in our community—it is ever present. The Danbury chapter of the NAACP is an example and an inspiration to all organizations dedicated to the cause of justice and I am proud to recognize them for their efforts. I ask that all Members of the United States House of Representatives join me in honoring their 50 years of outstanding achievement.

HONORING THE FIRST RESPONDERS AND SUPPORTING THE VICTIMS OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, over the course of just one week, my home State of California has witnessed the most destructive and expansive wildfires in its history. Across southern California, more than a dozen large fires fueled by powerful Santa Ana winds burned over 500,000 acres. The flames engulfed forests, homes and businesses alike. In my congressional district, the city of Malibu lost homes, a community church, and Castle Kashan, an iconic landmark on the California coast.

As these fires raged, thousands of courageous firefighters risked their lives to battle the flames, tirelessly working shift after shift in grueling conditions. Hundreds of volunteers donated money, resources, and time to help the nearly 1 million Californians evacuated at the height of the crisis. Officials at all levels of government acted swiftly to coordinate a rapid response. While we grieve for the hundreds of families who have been devastated, we must be thankful that even greater losses were averted.

The damage caused by the fires is staggering in its scope and heartbreaking in its impact on those who must start over from scratch. But Californians are resilient and determined to restore their communities and rebuild their lives. Today we stand in solidarity as we consider H. Res. 778, a resolution honoring the first responders and supporting the victims of the southern California wildfires. This resolution sends an important message to all Californians that the Nation is with them, and that Congress stands prepared to provide the assistance they need.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO RANDY BLACK, SR.

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Randy Black, Sr., who is the recipient of the 2007 Lieder Award. The Lieder Award is given annually to a person or organization that demonstrates outstanding leadership in the southern Nevada real estate industry by the Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies at the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

Randy has had a lasting impact on southern Nevada that began when he enrolled in Clark County Community College in an effort to become a realtor. Throughout his career he has had a multi-faceted experience, working as a title examiner for First American Title/Stewart Title, a commercial real estate salesman with Robert Realty Investment and Development, and a commercial real estate broker with Consolidated Realty and Management. Since 1977, he has served as the chairman of the board, owner, and broker with Diversified Re-

alty. He has also been a partner with many different businesses in southern Nevada including Beano's Casino Restaurant and Lounge and Shuck's Seafood Restaurant and Lounges. In addition, he has been a managing partner with Virgin River Hotel and Casino, Casablanca Hotel Resort and Casino, and Oasis Resort Casino in Mesquite, Nevada. Randy also owns many development projects in southern Nevada.

Along with all of his work in the real estate industry, Randy has also dedicated his time to various boards and commissions. He has been active with the City of Las Vegas Citizens Advisory Board and the Nellis Air Force Base Support Team. He has utilized his expertise in real estate to contribute his time to the Southern Nevada Homebuilders Association and the Las Vegas Board of Realtors Political Action Committee.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Randy Black, Sr. His constant commitment to the advancement of the real estate community in southern Nevada is honorable, and I wish him congratulations as the 2007 Lieder Award recipient.

PROTECTING VETERANS FUNDING LETTERS

HON. STEVAN PEARCE

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, I submit the two letters I referred to in my 1 minute this morning.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, October 4, 2007.

Office of the Senate Majority Leader,
U.S. Capitol,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER REID: We write today to ask you to keep the Senate in session the week of October 8, to help pass this year's veterans appropriations. Now that we are already into the new fiscal year, it is imperative that the House and Senate reach a prompt agreement on the conference report on the FY2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 2642).

It is unfortunate the Senate has been unable to act upon many of its Constitutionally mandated appropriations bills. While the House continues to wait upon the Senate to complete its work, we call upon you to quickly move veterans appropriations through conference so a final version of the bill may be passed and presented to the President. We believe that veterans issues rise above the partisan divisions of Washington which is evident by the passage of the FY08 MilCon-Veterans appropriations with overwhelming majorities in both Houses, 50-3 combined.

The Senate cannot allow this critically important funding to continue to fall victim to the usual partisan wrangling which occurs all too often in Washington. If tragedies such as the recent revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are to be diverted in the future, we must pass veterans funding now. From FY 2001 the total VA budget rose from \$48 billion to approximately \$70 billion in FY 2006, a 46 percent increase. This year, the House voted to increase funding by \$6 billion dollars over FY07, one of the largest in the 77 year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Because we have asked so much of our brave men and women in uniform

during the War on Terror we must uphold our commitment to veterans upon their return home.

Earlier in the year, the new Majority agreed they would continue the trend of significant increases in veterans funding begun by the Republican Congress. We ask you to honor that agreement and see that the commitment we made to our veterans is upheld.

We must never forget the sacrifice of our veterans. As members of Congress, we have a solemn obligation to fulfill our promises to them. We ask you to look past the heightened partisanship of our times and unite us on this issue by making it a first priority to bring a stand-alone veterans appropriations bill through conference so the Congress may present the President with a bill no later than October 12, 2007.

Sincerely,

Steve Pearce, Tim Walberg, Jean Schmidt, Darrell Issa, Jim Saxton, Don Young, Scott Garrett, Jeff Miller, Trent Franks, Duncan Hunter, Jo Ann Davis, Pete Sessions.

Phil Gingrey, Phil English, Thelma Drake, Jeb Hensarling, Ginny Brown-Waite, Peter Roskam, Vito Fossella, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, John Carter, Dan Burton, K. Michael Conaway, John Kuhl.

Tom Feeney, Tom Price, James Sensenbrenner, Gus Bilirakis, Wally Herger, Doug Lamborn, Greg Walden, Gary Miller, Michele Bachmann, John Kline, Tom Tancredo, Geoff Davis.

Adrian Smith, Paul Ryan, John Doolittle, John Peterson, Rick Renzi, Mark Souder, Louie Gohmert, Michael McCaul, Randy Neugebauer, Wayne Gilchrest, Jim Gerlach.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, September 17, 2007.

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER,
U.S. Capitol,
Washington, DC.

MADAM SPEAKER: We write to urge you in the strongest possible terms to reach a prompt agreement on the conference report on the FY2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 2642). Few issues are more important than adequate funding for our nation's veterans. The leadership in the House cannot allow this critically important funding to fall victim to the usual partisan wrangling which occurs all too often in Washington.

Veterans should not be used as tools for political bargaining and gamesmanship. Both the House and Senate passed the FY08 MilCon-Veterans appropriations with overwhelming majorities because our commitment to veterans rises above partisan squabbling. Tragedies such as the recent revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center must never be repeated. The findings of insufficient care at Walter Reed and other facilities should be seen by Congress as a mandate to finish the work and live up to the promises we have made to our veterans.

After decades of flat funding, total VA budget rose from \$48 billion in FY 2001 to approximately \$70 billion in FY 2006, a 46 percent increase. This year, the House voted to increase funding by \$6 billion dollars over FY07, one of the largest in the 77 year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Both the Senate and House versions received overwhelming majority support passing by a vote of 409-2 in the House and 92-1 in the Senate.

Earlier in the year, the new Majority agreed they would continue the trend of significant increases in veterans funding begun by the Republican Congress. We ask you to honor that agreement and see that the commitment we made to our veterans is honored.

We must never forget the sacrifice of our veterans. As members of Congress, we have a

solemn obligation to fulfill our promises to them. We ask for you to look past the heightened partisanship of our times and unite us on this issue by making it a first priority to quickly bring a stand alone Veterans appropriations bill through conference so the Congress may present the President with a bill by October 1, 2007.

We stand ready to assist you in reaching this goal.

Sincerely,

Steve Pearce, Gus Bilirakis, Thelma Drake, Pete Sessions, Louie Gohmert, Jean Schmidt, Jim Saxton, Dana Rohrabacher, Mario Diaz-Balart, Sue Myrick, Tom Feeney.

Jon Porter, Rick Renzi, Marilyn Musgrave, Michael Burgess, Michael Conaway, Mark Souder, Tim Walberg, Steve King, Ron Lewis, Jeff Miller, Tom Tancredo.

Steve Buyer, Peter Roskam, John Mica, John Kline, Paul Ryan, Greg Walden, Tom Price, Mary Fallin, Randy Forbes, Mary Bono, Spencer Bachus.

Dean Heller, Barbara Cubin, John Shimkus, Jim Gerlach, Jeb Hensarling, Geoff Davis, Scott Garrett, Adrian Smith, Mike Ferguson, Don Young, Ginny Brown-Waite.

SMITHSONIAN MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2007

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, the Smithsonian Institution is a unique and irreplaceable cultural, historical, educational and artistic complex without any public or private counterpart in the world. Since its founding, the Smithsonian has become an extraordinary array of world class museums, galleries, educational showplaces and unique research centers including 19 museums and galleries, 9 research facilities, the National Zoo, and a National Museum of African American History and Culture, approved by Congress, now seeking funding from the private sector for construction. The Smithsonian has grown with trust funds, donations from American culture and life, and other financial contributions.

However, most of its funding continues to come from federal appropriations. Despite receiving 70 percent of its support from the federal government, the Smithsonian has long had serious and mounting unmet infrastructure and other financial needs. Infrastructure needs have increased to \$2.5 billion, and continuing deterioration threatens exhibits and restricts access. Congress must help the Smithsonian Institution strengthen its ability to build resources beyond what taxpayers are able to provide. The most important step that Congress could take today is to finally rescue the Smithsonian from the 19th century governance structure that keeps it from accessing needed available private resources and limits close and critical internal oversight similar to what public and private facilities receive today. This bill provides a structure befitting an agency of the unique complexity of the Smithsonian's, without which these goals cannot be reached.

In no small part, the difficulty the Smithsonian has faced results from limitations inherent to its antiquated governance structure. The existing structure may have fit the Smithsonian 160 years ago, but today, the structure has proven to be a relic that has disserved the Institution. The present governance places im-

mense responsibility on dedicated but overextended members of the House and Senate, the Vice President of the United States and Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, fully half of the board, who must perform their fiduciary duties as board members while giving first priority to their sworn responsibilities as important Federal officials.

The need for new revenue streams and for a modern governance structure has been clear for years but can no longer be avoided following unprecedented controversies and irresponsible risks taken by Smithsonian management. The Smithsonian's first full-blown scandal in its 160 year history, replete with embarrassing coverage, has damaged the Smithsonian's reputation and perhaps the confidence of potential contributors. The poor judgment and overreaching of Smithsonian personnel require new and concentrated oversight by citizens from whom the Smithsonian can command priority attention. The Regents, of course, have taken some important action on their own. After irregularities were uncovered by the media, the Regents responded to the controversies by creating a Governance Committee, chaired by Patty Stonesifer, a Regent who is chief executive officer of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with a mandate to comprehensively review the policies and practices of the Smithsonian and how the Board conducts its oversight of the Institution. The Board also established an Independent Review Committee (IRC), chaired by Charles A. Bowsher, former Comptroller General of the United States, to review the issues arising from the Inspector General's reports, the Regents' response, and related Smithsonian practices.

The Independent Review was forthright in its investigation and recommendations. The IRC stated explicitly in its report that the root cause of the current problems at the Smithsonian was an antiquated governance structure that led to failures in governance and management. According to the IRC, the Board of Regents for the Smithsonian must recognize a fiduciary responsibility that carries a "major commitment of time and effort, a reputational risk and potentially, financial liability." The IRC further found that the Smithsonian, with a budget of over \$1 billion a year, must have a Board of Regents who "act as true fiduciaries and who have both the time and the experience to assume the responsibilities of setting strategy and providing oversight. Time is a major factor." The IRC cited lack of clarity of the roles of the Vice President and Chief Justice on the Board, and said that "it is not feasible to expect the Chief Justice to devote the hours necessary to serve as a fiduciary agent." The same might be said of members of the House and Senate who serve. The IRC recommends expanding the level of expertise and number of board members and ensuring that Regents who are appointed have sufficient time and attention to dedicate to the Smithsonian.

The Smithsonian's own Governance Committee identified several board weaknesses and concluded that the Regents did not receive or demand the reports necessary for competent decision making, that staff whom the Regents depended upon for oversight inquiries, did not have direct access or the relationships necessary to bring forward important